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ABSTRACT

This handbook provides Louisiana educators with information on the special needs of migrant children, the lawful obligations of Louisiana schools to address those needs, and the types of assistance available through the Migrant Education Program and other resources. To meet the needs of at-risk migrant students, the Louisiana Department of Education makes subgrants to school districts and other agencies to deliver special services under the Title I Migrant Education Program, as authorized by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. According to the specific definitions for the Title I Program, migrant children and youth are ages 3 through 21 and have moved across school district lines within the past 3 years, alone or with a parent or guardian who is seeking temporary or seasonal work in an agricultural or fishing activity. Children in Louisiana's Migrant Education Program have been identified by a Migrant Education recruiter and are formally enrolled in the program. Information on the needs and rights of migrant children is given, as well as information for dealing with children who do not speak English or who have limited English proficiency. Services provided by the Migrant Education Program are listed. The handbook includes telephone numbers for contacting migrant education programs within the state. School systems by assigned area are also listed. (CDS)

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Guidelines Governing the Education of Migrant Children in Louisiana

Louisiana Department
of Education
Migrant Education Program

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A POPULATION AT RISK

Children of migrant farmworkers and fishermen who move in and out of Louisiana schools are among the most disadvantaged and most at-risk of all student populations. Typically, they are affected not only by the instability associated with a mobile lifestyle, but also by poverty, health and nutritional problems, and sometimes by language and cultural barriers as well. About two-thirds of migrant students are overage for grade, and less than half of them graduate from high school.

To meet the needs of these students, the Louisiana Department of Education makes subgrants to school districts and other agencies to deliver special services under the Title I Migrant Education Program, as authorized by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. But this Federal program, funded at minimal levels, can offer only a fraction of the supplemental aid needed by these children. Their success depends primarily upon the teachers and educational support personnel with whom they are in daily contact during their residency in Louisiana. The primary purpose of this handbook is to acquaint Louisiana educators with the special needs of migrant children, the lawful obligations of Louisiana schools to address those needs, and the types of assistance available through the Migrant Education Program and other resources.

WHO ARE MIGRANT CHILDREN?

Migrant children are children who move with their families in pursuit of short-duration agricultural or fishing work. According to the specific definitions for the Title I Migrant Education Program, they are children and youth aged 3 through 21, inclusive, who have moved across school district lines within the past three years, either with a parent or guardian seeking temporary or seasonal work in an agricultural or fishing activity, or on their own in pursuit of such work. Agricultural activity includes not only the cultivation and harvesting of crops, but also food processing; dairy, poultry or livestock work; the cultivation and harvesting of trees; and work on fish farms, so long as the work is temporary or seasonal. Because of the broad range of qualifying activities, many migrant children in Louisiana do not conform to the stereotypical image of migrant farmworker children.

The priority group of migrant children, as defined in the law, are those whose education has been interrupted and who are most at risk of not meeting the state's academic standards. In practice, almost all migrant children who have moved within the past 12 months qualify as priority children, because most of them have moved during the school year and almost all are at risk, as the term is widely accepted by educators. Because a primary role of the Migrant Education Program is to address problems caused by mobility--interrupted education, discontinuity in curriculum and educational experiences--the Program especially targets children who have moved within the past 12 months, with the most attention placed on those who have moved most recently. However, children

whose move occurred between one and three years earlier can still be served by the Migrant Education Program, based on their needs and the availability of resources after the needs of more recently arrived children are met. Research and experience have shown that the effects of migrancy tend to linger long after a family ceases to migrate, with the needs of formerly migrant students slowly diminishing over time as compared to the needs of children who continue to migrate actively. Other than their common background of mobility and the instability resulting from it, migrant children are as diverse a group as one is likely to find in any school population in Louisiana. They come from all racial, ethnic and national backgrounds. They include Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, Southeast Asian and Native American children. No single group predominates in Louisiana. Nationally, the majority of migrant students is Hispanic, but that has not been the case in Louisiana. In a recent year, the racial composition of students served by the Migrant Education Program looked like this:

White	43.7	percent
Southeast Asian	30.5	"
African-American	16.2	"
Hispanic	8.7	"
Native American	0.9	"

Many of these children demonstrated significant academic needs, and most of them were near or below the poverty level. More than a third of them lived in

homes where English is not the primary language, but not all of those children were limited in their own capacity to communicate in English. They included children who were effectively bilingual, children who were fluent only in English, and students of varying degrees of limited proficiency in English. Some were actively mobile during the school year, even changing schools two or three times during the year, while some had effectively "settled out" in their communities. Many were enrolled in supplemental instructional programs such as Chapter 1, but some were high achieving students who excelled in challenging subject matter.

LOCATING MIGRANT CHILDREN

One thing that all children enrolled in Louisiana's Migrant Education Program have in common is that they have been identified by a Migrant Education *recruiter* and formally enrolled in the program. Recruiters are trained specialists who work with Louisiana schools and other public agencies to identify migrant children, but they are too few in number to ensure that all potentially eligible children are enrolled in Migrant Education. In all probability, there are other mobile children who would be eligible for the Migrant Education Program *if only* they were identified and enrolled. No one knows how many migrant children go unidentified each year, either because they enroll in schools where there is no process in place to identify them, or because they are never enrolled in school at all.

All school personnel, especially those directly involved in the registration of students, can assist in identifying migrant students. In areas where agriculture or fishing are major industries, the likelihood is much higher that new students would qualify for the Migrant Education Program. However, families who formerly moved for temporary or seasonal agricultural or fishing employment frequently relocate for other reasons, and they could appear almost anywhere. So long as their qualifying move occurred within the past three years, their children are still eligible.

When enrolling new students who have just moved into the district, whether at the start of a new school year or at any time during the year, personnel can ask the students (or the parents, in the case of younger children) if they moved to work in an agriculture or fishing-related activity within the past three years. If so, the children may be eligible for the Migrant Education Program. (A logical follow-up question would be "Were you [your children] enrolled in the Migrant Education Program in your previous school?" However, the absence of a prior enrollment does not mean that the new children are not eligible. They may have been overlooked previously, or they may have become eligible based on this move.)

All school personnel should be alert to the possibility of a newly enrolled child's being eligible for the Migrant Education Program. When this occurs--either because it is learned that the child was previously enrolled in the Program or because the family has moved into the school district for agricultural or fishing activities--personnel should immediately contact the Migrant Education Office serving the district.

Every Migrant Education office has a toll-free telephone number, and so does the state office in Baton Rouge. The list of telephone numbers is provided on Page 20. Call the area office first to obtain the quickest results; if no staff are available at the area office, call the state office.

The Migrant Education office may be able to determine, through an inquiry to nationally linked databases, whether the child has previously been enrolled. Provide the Migrant Education office with the name and birthdate for each child, the parents' names, and the address where they now live. This will enable the Migrant Education office to direct a recruiter to the parents to make a determination of eligibility. If the child is already on the national database, the office will alert both a recruiter and a migrant child advocate, so that services to the child and the family can begin as soon as possible.

If the parent is present, it may expedite the process to permit the parent to talk directly with the Migrant Education office. Usually, the Migrant staff can determine with only a couple of questions when families are not eligible. When the family does seem likely to be eligible, a visit by the recruiter can be scheduled.

Migrant Education may also be able to facilitate the enrollment itself. The existing data bases provide records of immunizations for many migrant students. If parents cannot produce a record of their children's immunizations, call the Migrant Education office.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN?

In one sense, the needs of migrant children are no different from those of any other children. They need to learn to read, write, and compute, to develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills, to master progressively more challenging subject matter and progress toward graduation, postsecondary education and gainful employment and a place in society. In the drive for systemic school reform embodied in the Goals 2000 program and in other legislation, migrant children, like all students, will be expected to meet challenging academic standards.

That is the big picture. For many reasons, however, migrant children face many formidable obstacles on the road toward educational goals. Unless a family has relocated during the summer months or a holiday period, the most immediate need of a school-aged migrant child is to be enrolled in school immediately upon his or her family's arrival in their new or temporary location. When enrollment is delayed, children whose education has already been interrupted will lose still more precious days of instruction, and the difficulty of smoothing the transition between schools becomes greater.

Although every school system strives to ensure that school-aged children are enrolled and are attending classes, there are no clear guidelines for identifying new and temporary residents and promptly enrolling them in school. Migrant children have been called *invisible children*. They often move into isolated, remote areas and

could easily escape the attention of school officials for days, or even weeks, if their parents do not take them to school and enroll them. Fortunately, migrant families usually value education sufficiently to enroll their children in school within a short time after relocating. Still, because of language and cultural barriers, and sometimes because families expect older children to help work in the fields, some migrant families may be reluctant to take their children to a new school in a community that is strange to them. The Migrant Education Program, because of its contacts with growers and other agencies, is often able to identify newly arrived migrant families before children are enrolled in school, and in such cases is usually able to assist families in getting their children started in school.

Once a migrant child is enrolled in school, the primary concern is to restore some sense of continuity to his or her interrupted education. The most critical step is ensuring that children are placed in the correct grade. *If the parents or the child cannot provide records from the child's previous school, the Migrant Education Program can help. For all students previously enrolled in the Migrant Program, there has been information about the child's school history recorded in national and state databases which can usually be accessed by the Louisiana Migrant Education Program. If school history is not available through the data network, the migrant advocate will help secure information for the proper placement of the child.* Any school needing assistance in placing a migrant child should call its area Migrant Education office. For previously enrolled migrant children there is usually additional information about special programs in which the child was enrolled at the previous school, such as Title I or English as a Second Language.

The Migrant Education Program can also assist the school in obtaining information about the curriculum, textbooks or graduation requirements used at the child's previous school so that teachers can correlate instruction more effectively and with a minimum of pain.

Where there are gaps in the child's education resulting from the move--if he or she has missed two weeks of school while the family relocated and searched for work and a place to live, or if his or her previous teacher was three or four units behind the new one in spelling or math--the child may require tutoring outside the classroom to help the child catch up with his or her new classmates. By working with the child's new teacher, the migrant child advocate can determine whether the child can benefit from short-term intervention provided by the Migrant Education Program. *Ensuring a successful transition from the previous school to the new one is a priority for the Migrant Education Program. Consequently, such support for new migrant students will be widely available for most schools.*

Migrant children are likely to exhibit significant educational needs that are not necessarily the direct result of their mobility. Migrant children frequently exhibit deficiencies in reading, math and other basic skills. Some are Limited English-Proficient (LEP). A majority of them will be one or more years over-age for grade, automatically defining them as "at risk."

While the Migrant Education Program is the only one dealing directly with the impact of mobility on migrant children, there are other programs that are available in many schools to address many of their educational needs.

Migrant children are usually eligible for many of these programs. Migrant children often qualify for Title I or Title VII programs, where available. Many migrant families are eligible for the Homeless program because of living in temporary or substandard housing. The incidence of handicapped children among migrant students is no less than that among nonmigrant students, so many migrant students qualify for special education services.

Whenever a migrant child is eligible for, and stands to benefit from, any educational program, the migrant child advocate, in consultation with the teacher, will strive to ensure that the child receives the service. The concept of "linking" the migrant child with appropriate educational services that address his or her needs is fundamental to the Migrant Education Program. Except for those services directly linked to the child's recent mobility, Migrant Education is considered a provider "of last resort." It can provide direct tutorial and remediation services to migrant children when needed services are available from no other source, but its primary role is advocacy: it focuses on monitoring student progress, maintaining communications between home and school, helping teachers wherever possible with suggested strategies or resource materials, and ensuring that migrant students have access to all needed services for which they qualify.

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN?

No matter where he or she has moved from, no matter how brief the family's stay in a given community, a migrant child has exactly the same right as any other child to a free, public education. This is true even for children moving to Louisiana from another country. The 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* made it clear that citizenship status is not a condition for the enrollment of children in any public school. School officials should not ask parents of migrant children for proof of citizenship, or of legal residency status. Even children who are in the country illegally are entitled to a free, public education. If a child does not have a Social Security number, it is the responsibility of the school to assign a state identifying number under policy distributed by the Louisiana Department of Education. (See Bulletin 1851)

In actual practice, the matter of citizenship of migrant children will only rarely be of concern in Louisiana. Statistics show that approximately 35 percent of all migrant children nationwide were born in other countries, mostly in Mexico, but the percentage of migrant students enrolling in Louisiana schools who were born outside the United States has traditionally been much lower.

The migrant child's right to education goes beyond simple enrollment in school. State and Federal law declare that each child must be provided an opportunity to learn, to meet high academic standards. Migrant children have a right to a *meaningful* and *appropriate* educational experience. For all migrant children, this means

instruction that is linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate. For secondary students it means enrollment in courses that will carry credits toward graduation.

For additional information concerning the principles of Opportunity-to-Learn for migrant students, consult the publication *Giving Migrant Students an Opportunity to Learn*, available from the Bureau of Migrant Education.

WHAT IF THEY DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH?

For some migrant students--perhaps a quarter of all those enrolled in Louisiana but a much higher percentage in certain areas--the greatest barrier to success in school is the language barrier. The challenge of teaching children with limited proficiency in English is a continuing concern to educators. Because of mobility and the increasing diversity of American society, any school in any part of Louisiana may be presented at any time with the intimidating prospect--and intriguing possibilities--presented by students who are not proficient in English.

The Migrant Education Program urges all Louisiana educators to remember two basic principles:

Immigrant is not the same as migrant, as used in the Migrant Education Program. The fact of being Limited-English Proficient does not make a child a migrant. Eligibility for Migrant Education is based on mobility and employment.

When a migrant child is Limited English Proficient (LEP), he or she must be treated exactly the same as an LEP student who is not a migrant; that is, schools must comply with state guidelines.

Bulletin 1851 of the Louisiana Department of Education, *Educating the Language Minority Student with Limited English Proficiency*, details the responsibilities of schools for addressing the needs of students whose native language is other than English. These responsibilities have been set forth in a series of court decisions and are supported by laws on civil rights and equal opportunity.

Schools *must* ascertain the home language of every student registered. For every child whose home language is not English, a formal language assessment *must* be conducted.

If the language assessment demonstrates that the child is LEP, schools *must* diagnose instructional needs, *must* provide an alternative program for English language instruction, *must* establish criteria for entry into and exit from the alternative program, and *must* provide understandable instruction in content areas.

Schools *must* provide certified ESL teachers, appropriate and comparable instructional materials, and staff training opportunities.

The *musts* are emphasized to stress that schools bear the responsibility under law to ensure that language minority students--including migrant students who may be enrolled for only short periods--have an opportunity to receive an education. The Migrant Education Program cannot be

used to relieve schools of their lawful responsibility. Supreme Court rulings and civil rights legislation place the burden on the schools for meeting the diverse and often extensive needs of non-English speaking students.

However, the Migrant Education Program does have a clear interest in ensuring that migrant children have a chance to succeed in school. It also recognizes that migrant children may appear at any time in any school, including schools which have not previously enrolled LEP students and which have no capacity for meeting their educational needs. Accordingly, the Migrant Education program will assist schools in the assessment of LEP migrant students and in the development of programs to address those needs under certain circumstances.

Schools enrolling migrant students who are apparently LEP are advised to contact the area Migrant Education office for additional information.

WHAT CAN THE MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM DO TO HELP?

The Migrant Education Program is designed primarily to provide a continuing network of support to migrant children, especially those who have recently moved and who are actively migratory. It provides:

(1) access to information through a state database and an emerging network of other databases.

(2) a statewide network of identification specialists and migrant child advocates.

(3) a statewide communications system linking schools, parents, and service providers.

(4) instructional resources and materials for migrant students.

(5) short-term instructional support.

(6) special learning opportunities.

(7) linkage with a multitude of services and providers, in and out of schools.

(8) interstate and intrastate coordination of educational services for mobile children.

(9) technical assistance to schools serving migrant children.

The overall goal of the Migrant Education Program is simply this:

> *To help migrant children succeed in school no matter when or where they are enrolled.*

The Migrant Education Program is not a remediation program--it is a program of *advocacy* for migrant children, a program to help them reach the same educational goals expected of all other students. It is a program that can help all schools in Louisiana improve the educational experience of migrant children by providing critical

information, helpful resources, outreach to families, and trained specialists to link migrant children with needed resources.

The goals for the Louisiana Migrant Education Program, established by a Committee of Practitioners in 1993, are as follows:

(1) *To ensure that migrant children are treated equitably in all schools of the state and that they have full access to all needed educational programs and services.*

(2) *To provide continuity in educational experience for migrant children moving from school to school within the state and to or from schools in other states.*

(3) *To assist all schools responsible for educating Limited English Proficient migrant children.*

(4) *To ensure that all migrant children have an opportunity to enter school ready to learn.*

(5) *To maintain students on grade level, providing alternatives to retention wherever possible.*

(6) *To reduce the incidence of dropouts and improve the graduation rate among migrant students.*

(7) *To provide migrant children with a wide range of educational opportunities.*

(8) *To provide specially targeted educational services not available from other programs.*

(9) *To empower migrant parents to become active partners in the education of their children.*

(10) *To create an atmosphere of acceptance and belonging for migrant children in all schools in Louisiana.*

(11) *To provide training and to develop skills for educators of migrant children.*

(12) *To support education for migrant children through outreach, advocacy, linkage with service providers, and dissemination of information.*

For more information about the Migrant Education Program, contact the Migrant Education office in your area, or the state office in Baton Rouge. All are accessible toll-free.

CONTACTS FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

LOA	Agency	Local Phone No.	Toll-free No.
I	Union Community Action Agency, Inc., Farmerville	318-368-7027	800-725-9701
II	Ouachita Parish School Board Monroe	318-387-6417	800-725-9702
III	Delta Community Action Agency, Inc., Tallulah	318-574-2163	800-725-9703
IV	Louisiana Department of Education, Baton Rouge	504-342-3517	800-725-9704
V	Natchitoches Parish School Board, Natchitoches	318-352-1901	800-725-9705
VI	Jefferson Davis Parish School Board, Jennings	318-824-0597	800-725-9706
VII	Iberia Parish School Board New Iberia	318-364-7641	800-725-9707
VIII	Tangipahoa Parish School Board, Hammond	504-542-7290	800-725-9708
IX	Lafourche Parish School Board, Lockport	504-532-2508	800-725-9709
X	Jefferson Parish School Board, Harvey	504-349-7701	800-725-9710
XI	Orleans Parish School Board New Orleans	504-365-5592	800-725-9711

SCHOOL SYSTEMS BY ASSIGNED AREA

LOA I - Union Community Action Agency

Bienville
Bossier
Caddo
Claiborne
Lincoln
Union
Webster

LOA II - Ouachita

Caldwell
Jackson
Morehouse
Ouachita
Richland
West Carroll
Winn

LOA III - Delta Community Action Agency

East Carroll
Madison
Tensas

LOA IV - State Migrant Office

North	**South**
Avoyelles	Ascension
Catahoula	East Baton Rouge
Concordia	East Feliciana
Franklin	Iberville
Grant	West Baton Rouge
LaSalle	West Feliciana
Pointe Coupee	

LOA V - Natchitoches

DeSoto	Natchitoches
Rapides	Red River
Sabine	Vernon

LOA VI - Jefferson Davis

Acadia	Allen
Beauregard	Calcasieu
Cameron	Evangeline
Jefferson Davis	

LOA VII - Iberia

Iberia	Lafayette
St. Landry	St. Mary
St. Martin	Vermilion

LOA VIII - Tangipahoa

Livingston	St. Helena
St. Tammany	Tangipahoa
Washington	

LOA IX - Lafourche

Assumption	Lafourche
St. James	St. John the Baptist
Terrebonne	

LOA X - Jefferson

St. Charles Jefferson
Plaquemine

LOA XI - Orleans

Orleans St. Bernard